couplers formed opposite one another, for coupling the side edges of each surface structure to the side edges of other surface structures.

--11. The temporary ground covering of claim 10, wherein:

each male coupler has a side projection extending from a lower portion of the side edge and each female coupler has a corresponding recess on a lower portion of the side edge for mating with the side projection of the connected male coupler.

--12. The temporary ground covering of claim 10, wherein:

the male and female couplers comprise a sealing means, having counterpart surfaces formed on an upper portion of their respective side edges, for sealing the joined edges of connected surface structures, and

the counterpart surfaces form an angle that deviates from a normal line of the top surface.

--13. The temporary ground covering of claim 12, wherein:

the angle the counterpart surfaces form with the normal line of the top surface is approximately 15 degrees.--

REMARKS

Claims 1-13 remain pending in the application. Each of these claims is believed to define an invention that is novel and non-obvious over the prior art. Favorable reconsideration of this case is respectfully requested.

Withdrawal of the objection to the drawings is requested. The drawings have been objected to due to numerous instances where two reference characters have been used to designate the same object within the drawing. A proposed amendment to the drawings has been enclosed, as a separate attachment, to correct the noted deficiency.

Additionally, the specification has been amended to maintain correspondence between the disclosure and the drawings.

Withdrawal of the objection to the specification is requested. The Examiner has objected to the specification for lacking proper section headings. Proper section headings have been added to the specification by amendment; therefore, withdrawal of the objection is appropriate.

Claims 1-6 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, for numerous instances of indefiniteness. Claims 1, 4, and 6 have been rejected for using the phrases "such as," "or the like," and "and/or." Claim 1 has been rejected for lacking a proper antecedent basis for the recitation of "the basic thickness" and "the surface structure." Additionally, claim 1 has been rejected for a lack of clarity regarding the location of the recited surface structure.

Claims 1, 2, 4, and 6 have been amended to exclude all of the cited indefinite terms, as well as others that were not specifically identified in the Office Action. A proper antecedent basis has been included to introduce "the basic role thickness," in lines 26 and 27. A proper antecedent basis currently exists for the platform structure in line 26 of claim 1.

With regard to the Examiner's question regarding the location of the underlying surface, lines 23-26 of claim 1 recite that the platform structure extends from a bottom surface of the surface structure. The enclosed amendments to claim 1 are believed to better clarify this arrangement. Because claims 1-6 had been amended to overcome the rejections cited by the Examiner, withdrawal of the rejections to these claims is appropriate.

New claims 7-13 have been added to the application by amendment. These claims recite numerous elements not found in the references cited by the Examiner. For example, independent claim 7 recites a temporary ground covering comprising a plurality of surface structures that each have a substantially planar top surface of thermal insulation and a bottom surface from which support projections extend. The support projections lift the surface structure to form a gap between the ground surface and

portions of the surface structure's bottom surface that do not have support projections beneath them.

The references also fail to disclose a joint means connecting the plurality of surface structures, as claimed by Applicant.. This joint means has a parallelogram frame structure with an open center and four locking means that each may secure one of a number of interconnected surface structures, held together by the joint means. Each locking means has a projecting member that forms an essentially normal angle with a substantially planar surface of the frame structure, at one of its four corners. Each projecting member of the locking means interlocks with a corresponding recess member formed in a bottom surface corner of one of the attached surface structures.

The open center of the claimed joint means's frame structure is formed to receive one support projection from each of the attached surface structures. Moreover, the height of each support projection is about the same as the thickness of the frame structure.

Neither of the cited references disclose: (1) a joint means having a parallelogram frame structure with an open center; (2) a joint means having four locking means that each project from and form a normal angle with a substantially planar surface of the frame structure, at each of its corners; (3) a surface structure having a recessed member, formed in each corner of its bottom surface, that corresponds to and interlocks with the locking means; (4) one support projection from each of the connected surface structures that is received by the open center of the frame structure; and (5) the height of each support projection corresponding with the thickness of the frame structure. All of these listed elements are integral and necessary parts of the temporary ground covering structure of claim 7.

Newly added dependent claim 8 recites a frame structure that receives a support projection, within its open center, from each of four surface structures attached to the joint means. Dependent claim 9 recites a joint means having eight locking means, two at each corner of the frame structure. Each corner pair of locking means interlock with two corresponding recess members formed in a bottom surface corner of one attached surface structure. Newly added claims 10-13 all depend from claim 7 and also contain elements

not found in the references. Since the cited references fail to disclose the recited element of claims 7-13, these claims are novel and non-obvious. Therefore, allowance of claims 7-13 is appropriate.

Withdrawal of the rejection to claims 1-6, under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), is requested. These claims had been rejected as being obvious over Bue, *et al.* (U.S. 6,128,881) in view of Polen (U.S. 5,634,309).

To establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness, the prior art reference, or references when combined, much teach or suggest all claim limitations. Neither of the cited references discloses a frame part of the joint piece that has an open center arranged to pass recesses formed in the underside of the platform structure, as recited by Applicant in claim 1. The references also fail to disclose a height of these recesses corresponding to the thickness of the frame part, as recited in claim 1. Additionally, neither of the references disclose a locking assembly having projections, formed at the corners of the joint piece's frame part, and complementary recesses y2 formed on the underside of the surface structure, as recited in claim 1.

Dependent claim 2 recites square shaped platforms forming the platform structure on the underside of each surface structure. Four of these square shaped platforms, from four separate surface structures, are received by the open center of the joint piece's frame part, when the joint piece interconnects four surface structures. Dependent claim 3 recites two recesses y2, at each underside corner of a surface structure, that receive complementary projections y1 formed at the corners of the frame part. Similarly, dependent claims 5 and 6 contain additional limitations of the side edge coupling means not disclosed by the references.

Because the references fail to disclose all of the claimed elements of the independent claim, withdrawal of the rejection to claim 1 is appropriate. Since the cited references also fail to disclose the additional elements recited in claims 2, 3, 5, and 6, withdrawal of the rejection to these claims is appropriate too. Moreover, since claims 2-6 depend from an allowable independent claim, withdrawal of the rejection to these claims is appropriate for this additional reason.

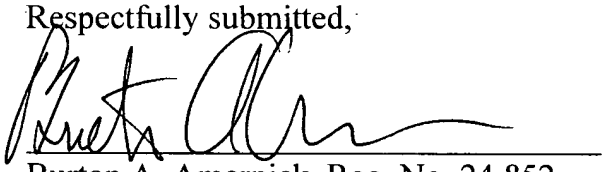
Applicants have enclosed a sketch of an embodiment of the invention to help provide a better understanding of the invention. (Please note, however, that the term "locking device" is used in this exhibit instead of the term "joint piece" (x), as used in the application.) According to the three drawings in the sketch, as well as to the original application, the joint piece (x) of the joint arrangement is meant for fastening, for example, four plates by their corners (according to the two drawings on top) or two plates side by side (as shown in the lowermost drawing). To provide a better context regarding the claimed structure's patentability, the PCT Search Report and the Preliminary Examination Report have been enclosed for consideration, also.

In view of the above, consideration and allowance are, therefore, respectfully solicited.

In the event the Examiner believes an interview might serve to advance the prosecution of this application in any way, the undersigned attorney is available at the telephone number noted below.

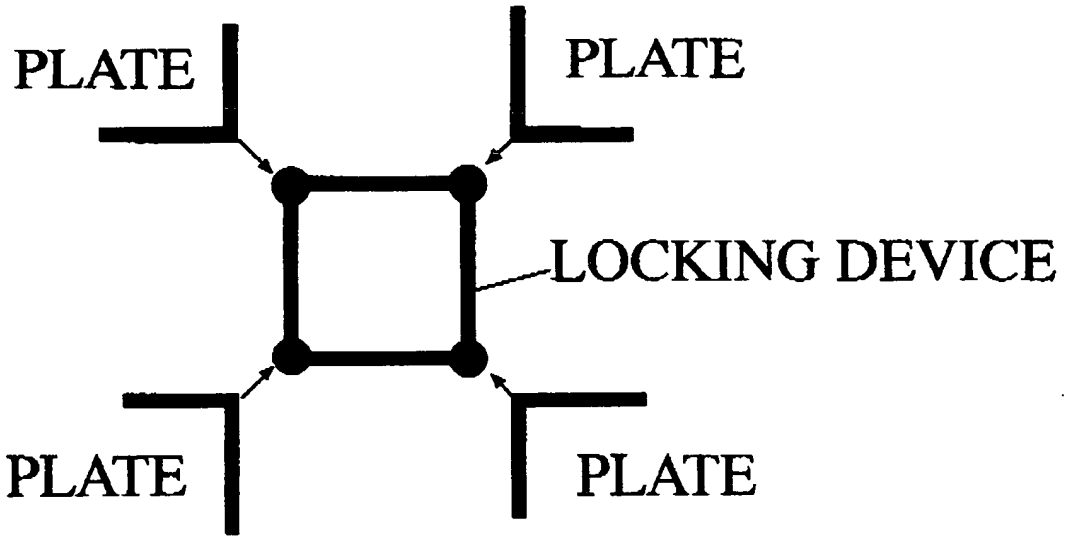
The Director is hereby authorized to charge any fees, or credit any overpayment, associated with this communication, including any extension fees, to Deposit Account No. 22-0185.

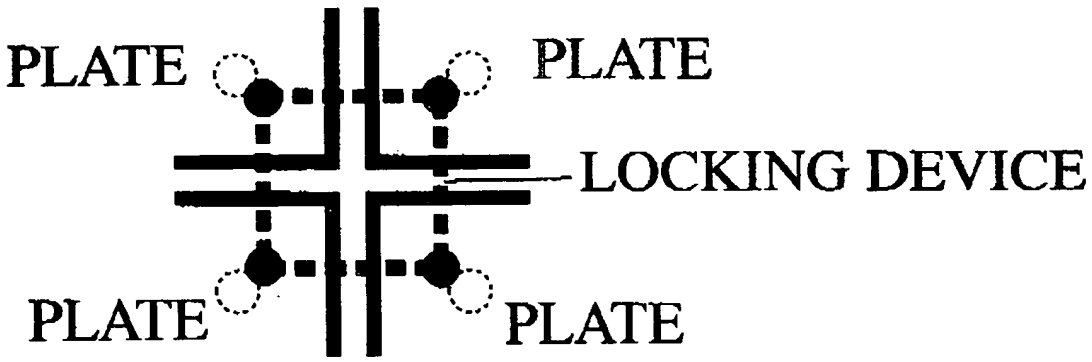
Respectfully submitted,

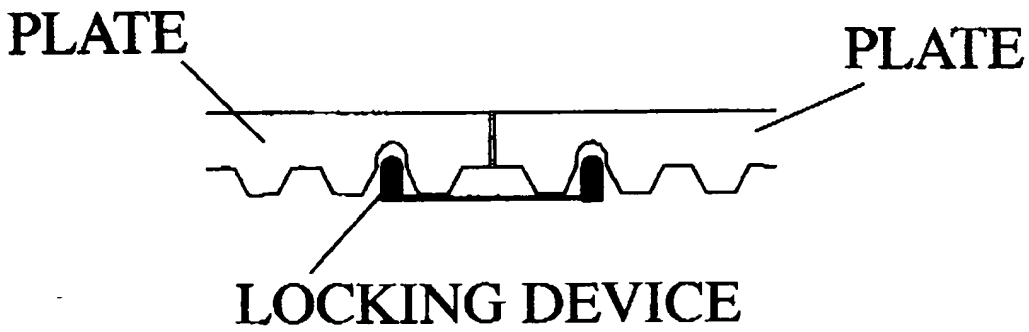


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